

WORKERS POWER



In another article in this pamphlet, we have stressed the importance of the African movements of liberation in bringing about the fall of fascism in Portugal. Two other factors were also very important –

1 – 1958-1962, the working-class struggle inside Portugal. There were the massive anti-fascist mobilisations of this period organised by the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP). On one of these demos, troops opened fire and murdered eleven proletarians. In 1973 there was a wave of strikes that included the Lisnave shipyards, TAP, and the Lisbon Bus Company (where workers went on strike by refusing to collect fares, but continued to run the buses!). In these strikes, the workers were able to play on the bosses' shortage of labour to raise wages and get better conditions. In the electronic and textile factories, the bosses' way to deal with the shortage of men workers (they were either in the army or emigrated) was bringing women into the workforce. Unfortunately for them, the women workers were just as militant, and women workers in the electronic plants became a vanguard sector as the strike-wave spread.

2 – The struggles of Portuguese emigrant workers. The

largest number of Portuguese emigrant workers went to France (over one million by 1973). With eight hundred thousand Portuguese, Paris was the second largest Portuguese city! The left-wing organisations were very active in France, especially the PCP, the Marxist-Leninists and a PRP front. For many Portuguese workers it was their first opportunity to be involved in class struggle. Supported by French revolutionaries, Portuguese workers successfully fought French government attempts to bulldoze the shantytowns they lived in. On another occasion, Portuguese workers at Simca dragged two PIDE agents, who worked with them in the factory, through the streets of Poissy (near Paris) with placards around their necks. Of course, only a minority of the emigrants became militants, the majority were still more concerned with saving enough money to buy a piece of land back home.

Since the 25 April *

Since the fall of fascism, the class struggle in the workplaces has gathered momentum continually. In order to

** For the period until February, see the first five issues of *Our Common Struggle*, the article in *Big Flame Journal* (No 1), and Blackburn in *New Left Review*, 87-88.*

understand how the situation is developing, it is important to see the different situations different sections of the proletariat found themselves in after 25 April:



1 – Industrial workers of the large Portuguese companies (CUF, Champalimaud, etc.): for workers in these companies, the struggle has continually centred around the purging of fascists. In every attempt of the Right to regain power, the management and owners of these companies have been implicated – they were the financial interests that Spinola represented: After Spinola was forced out, these companies, CUF, Spirito Santo, etc., have been actively engaged in economic sabotage and the workers in them have forced the government to take them into the state sector. CUF, the last remaining large private monopoly company, was nationalised in May.

2 – Industrial workers in the small and medium Portuguese companies: in many cases, the owners of these companies have not been financially able to meet the minimum wage agreements that the workers forced the provisional governments to legally enforce. Many of these companies have gone bust and the owners disappeared. In these situations, the workers have taken the factories over and run them as a co-operative. Sometimes this has not been possible and the workers have become unemployed. Very many small and medium sized companies relied for making profit on fascist forms of control, and they have not been able to survive in the 'democratic' conditions that have existed since 25 April. They employed the large majority of workers and their failure in the new conditions is the main economic reason why the MFA has been forced to see that social-democracy ('welfare' capitalism) is not a possibility in Portugal.

For the interests of UK companies in Portugal see the pamphlet 'Financial Interests' by CFMAGB, 12 Little Newport St, London WC2

3 – Industrial workers in companies belonging to foreign (multinational) firms: in the majority of cases, these companies were financially able and were prepared to meet the

workers' demands for higher wages. Some of the multinationals were only in Portugal because of the low wages – these companies are running down their Portuguese plants and going somewhere else (e.g. Plessey transferring its production to Malta). Those multinationals which planned to sell what they manufactured in their Portuguese plants inside Portugal are still there (e.g. Unilever). Since most of their management is foreign, they have not been that much affected by the fascist purges. They have been the sector of the economy that the government and the MFA have been the most protective towards – they are the financial interests behind the Socialist Party.

4 – Industrial and service workers in the state sector. As companies go bankrupt or are taken over by workers, the state sector of the economy is growing very fast. Until February 1975, the attitude of government/MFA towards the state sector workers was very much under the influence of the PCP – workers in the state sector (and the nationalised industries) had no class enemy as boss and therefore were not allowed to strike. Under the influence of the PCP, the MFA intervened to smash the strikes of the TAP workers, the postal workers, etc. As more and more private sector workers became public sector workers as their company was nationalised, the CP's control of the unions of public sector workers was limited, and at the same time the MFA was no longer prepared to accept the CP's advice to smash workers in the public sector. The 'voluntary day of labour' the government called for on 4 October was another CP initiative. The way the workers, led by the post office workers, dismissed this anti-working class idea shows that they are quickly learning to assess for themselves the suggestions of the CP and the provisional government.

The situation of the agricultural proletariat is examined in the introduction to the section on social struggles.

From this too short summary, we can see that different sectors of the proletariat have to fight the class struggle in very different conditions: what unites all these sectors is that they are all on the offensive and winning. There is no magic formula that can make sense of what is happening throughout the country as a whole, and, not surprisingly, there is no one political revolutionary organisation that has been able to unite all these sectors. As far as industrial workers are concerned, one can say that they are slowly coming to see that their class interests are different from those of organisations like the CP, the Provisional Government and the MFA (as a whole), and that to defend these interests they need totally independent (autonomous) forms of organisation.

The translations in this section are all from February 1975 or later. They have been chosen so as to show the variety and richness of the work place struggle. They are all descriptions of the process of building independent forms of organisation that the Portuguese working class is involved in.

They are taken from the French paper Liberation.

NATO & UNEMPLOYMENT OUT!

This march, against unemployment, is extremely important because it is the first mass event organised by the Workers' Commissions, which in February existed in thirty-seven factories in the Lisbon area. In most cases, it is the Workers Commissions that represent the workers in their dealings with management, rather than the CP-dominated Inter-syndical. Given its behaviour in the summer of 1974, many workers begin to feel that the Intersindical is there to break their struggle and not to support it. They therefore feel the need for their own factory organisations independent of any political party (the Portuguese word is 'without party'). The Workers' Commissions are the result of this need. Delegates from the thirty-seven Workers' Commissions of the Lisbon area meet weekly at an interfactory meeting – the one on the 27 January decides on the 7 February march. The CP knows that the organ it controls, the Intersindical, is being

by-passed by the Workers' Commissions. Not surprisingly, it tries to get the march banned. Whether the march goes on depends on the decision of the MFA. The MFA decides that the march will take place. This marks another leap forward in the class struggle – the control of the CP over the working class is decisively weakened. There is now a clear way forward for the establishment of grass-roots links between the left of the MFA, the vanguard soldiers and the vanguard workers. The CP had tried to prevent this by keeping all contacts at a bureaucratic (high-up) level. A way is now open for vanguards 'without a political party' to work together. The 11 March allows this process to be accelerated and now (June) in Portugal there is a situation where grass root organisation is in the process of making irrelevant the elections and the main political parties.

Since June 74, general assemblies of workers have been electing Workers' Commissions in the majority of the factories. This movement is made easier because the PCP is opposing strikes because it does not want to frighten the military and the Portuguese bourgeoisie. Its alliance with Spínola will have the paradoxical effect of weakening the influence of the PCP in the factories.

Two hundred thousand unemployed – soon three hundred thousand. As the strikes continue, the Commissions are recognised by the government as ad hoc bodies. By now, in thirty-seven of the largest factories in Lisbon, commissions exist that are elected and recallable by the general assemblies. The tactic of the Intersindical towards the Commissions has changed: it now tries to get its representatives elected onto them. The movement of strikes has not lost momentum since June; the main issue is the purge of the fascists. Now there are two other important issues – the crisis of unemployment and rising prices. Portugal has two hundred thousand unemployed out of a population of nine millions; the economy is underdeveloped; prices are rising at the rate of thirty-five percent. The workers expect three hundred thousand unemployed in March. That is why they want an acceleration of the revolutionary process in a clearly anti-capitalist direction.

Inter-Factory Meetings

In September, after the strike of the TAP workers and the march on Lisbon of the Lisnave shipyard workers, the first attempt was made to bring together the workers commissions. Delegates from the Commissions start coming to an Inter-Factory meeting every Sunday. It is this body that sponsored the demo of 28 September after the failure of the attempted coup of the Spínolists. It calls for a march on 7 February 'against unemployment'.

The call for the march

The leaflet calling for support of the march made clear the intentions of the commissions: A demo clearly without party. Political organisations that want to support this initiative can do so by leaflets, but at the demo they must bring neither slogans nor their own banners. The organisation of the demo allows for the participation of isolated workers, of students, of soldiers and of sailors, as long as they accept the stewardship of the Workers' Commissions. The aims: against redundancies, against unemployment and overtime, for higher basic wages, for the right to work.

The Commissions claim that if two million workers worked an hour a day less, this would create two hundred and fifty thousand jobs.



Lastly, the leaflet stressed the anti-capitalist nature of the demo. Unemployment is an inevitable consequence of capitalism. That is why workers want to destroy it and build a new world. And this was written on the banner that led the demo on 7 February. At the last minute, the Commissions decide on another slogan: 'NATO out, national independence!'.

The sleepless nights of Alvaro Cunhal

This initiative was a threat to the PCP and to the representativity of the Intersindical. It showed to the whole proletariat that a large autonomous working class force existed. More precisely, it would weaken the claim the PCP made to the MFA to be the only representative of the Portuguese working class.

On Thursday morning, the civil governor of Lisbon, a fellow traveller of the PCP, proclaims that all public demonstrations are banned in Lisbon from the 7 to 12 February. More violent is the condemnation of the trade unions in the South (part of the Intersindical). In their statement they say that: 'This demonstration is an attempt to confuse the democratic forces and to sabotage the construction of democracy'. All the political parties in the coalition government oppose the demo, and also the marxist-leninist MRPP.

Only the LUAR, the MES, the PRP and the marxist-leninist UDP support it.

The support of the MFA

By coincidence, the monthly delegate assembly of the MFA was taking place on the Thursday. It was expected that it would ban the demo. In the meantime, the Commissions were announcing that they would go ahead with the demo. On the Friday morning members of the Commissions went to see COPCON. At the end of this meeting it was announced that the MFA did not object to the demo. This is a vital event that modifies the relationship of forces in Portugal. The MFA had disagreed with the PCP and encouraged the expression of an autonomous workers' power that in the weeks to come would accelerate the revolutionary process in Portugal.

In the shadow of the 'Saratoga'

Around 1830 hours, the workers from the left bank of the Tagus disembark at Commerce Square. They are in their work clothes, with red helmets. They carry 'without party' banners with the names Lisnave, Setanave, Effacec, National Steel. The stewards have walkie-talkies and red arm-bands; they are all workers. They form a human chain around the demo.

In the background, three hundred yards from the shore, is the aircraft carrier 'Saratoga' of the US Navy. The demo is led by a jeep of the military police and a car of the DSP (the riot police). It is dark when it gets to the Rossio (the main square). Other delegations continue to join this compact body that only chants the approved slogans. All observers are struck by the strength the demo conveys — it exemplifies 'proletarian discipline'.

The demo, by now forty thousand strong, goes up Liberty Avenue (the main drag). Now the US embassy is four hundred yards away. Blocking the road, a hundred yards from the embassy are the COPCON troops under the command of Jaime Neves. Two companies of commandos stand in front of the troop carriers, armed with machine-guns. The MFA did not trust the police, which still contains many fascist elements. When the demo is only a hundred yards from the commandos, a quiet shout comes from the gathered workers — 'Forward'. Neves decides to let the demonstration through. He makes the troops under his command fall back and take up formation in front of the embassy. As the march passes the embassy it is flanked on either side by a cordon of commandos and one of parachutists. Shouts of 'NATO out, down with imperialism' are followed by a stony silence.

The soldiers are sons of the people

The demo makes its way to the Ministry of Labour, which is

guarded by another COPCON unit and two companies of the light artillery regiment (RAL1). Those at the front of the march shout: 'Soldiers on our side'.

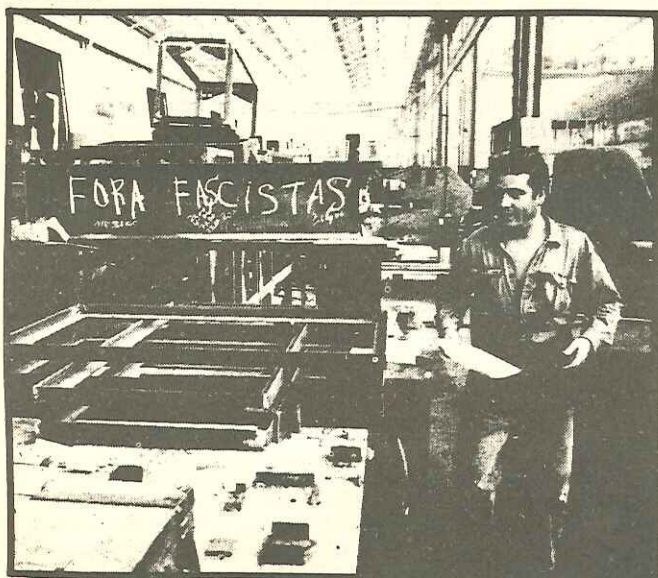
Then occurs a scene that helps you understand Portugal today — the soldiers, with portable machine-guns slung around them, turn to the Ministry of Labour, at the same time they raise their fists, to the great applause of the marchers. With clenched fists, workers and soldiers together shout: 'NATO out! National independence!' People were crying with joy.

This extraordinary scene, which reflects the alliance that exists in Portugal today and which shows the amazing politicisation of the army, is followed by speeches. Five workers speak, including one who is unemployed. During his speech, a worker from Setenave says: 'Of what use are most of the leaderships of the trade unions and the Intersindical? Only to call for demos that want to strengthen the political position of certain parties that are traitors to the working class.' As the demo is ending, a delegate from a Workers' Commission tells me: 'This is an irreversible victory for the Portuguese working class over reformist and revisionist organisations, over all those who think they have a right to represent it.' Another worker, member of a Commission, takes me by the arm: 'What we want, us workers, is to take power. Long live the working class!' It was a quarter to midnight.

STEEL WORKERS ORGANISE

On the other side of the Tagus, facing Lisbon, lies the red suburb. From Montijo to Caparica. The plants of the metal-processing and the electrical industry are there as well as power stations. From the 25 April Bridge you can see a giant blast furnace. The only one in Portugal, it is part of the National Steel plant which is owned by the Portuguese tycoon, Champasimau¹ — a supporter of Spínola.

National Steel is a brand new steel plant with four thousand highly qualified workers. My guide is Manuel, a technical worker who works in a lab. We go through the gate and go towards where management's offices are. Everywhere there are signs of 25 April — there are posters on the wall and doors, especially of the parties. On the first floor, at the end of the corridor, there are two offices: one of the director general of the plant, the other of the workers' commission, with 'Workers' Commission' written on the door. Inside the Commission's office there is written on the wall, 'According to the position of the MFA, it is not possible that a minority continues to enjoy the privileges it 'fought for' under fascism'.



Inside the steel plant. The slogan says 'Out with the Fascists!'

Each section of the work force elects a delegate to the Commission, who is recallable by the general assembly of that sector. The commission has thirty-two delegates. Here, it is the basis of command. As far as the problems of National Steel are concerned, the Commission does not accept that any other political organ is above them.

Before the 25 April there were twenty-five unions that represented the workers on a trade by trade basis (horizontally). They were not allowed to meet nationally, nor between themselves in the factory. The union delegates were controlled by the ministers of the (fascist) corporations. Now 'the only vertical union is the Commission. It is the only organ that really represents the workers.'

A delegate tells me: 'The horizontal unions by trade divided the workers. Here it is the Commission that negotiates for the workers. It has taken the place of the unions. The delegates of the pre-25 April unions have been by-passed. By the way, almost all the delegates of the twenty-five old unions are in the Intersindical.² Eight months after 25 April, the situation is unclear in the factories. There are the remains of the fascist inheritance, there are the Commissions, and, also, the Intersindical. For example, in the old fascist unions you did not have to enrol — the only thing that was obligatory was to pay your dues! Everyone is still paying these dues but no-one is enrolled. The delegates of these unions represent nothing.'

The authority of the Intersindical is not recognized in this, the third largest factory in Portugal. This adds to the 'confusion' of the situation. One of the eight delegates in the room adds that on 10 May the MFA recognised the commission as the ad hoc body that negotiated on behalf of the National Steel workers.

The May demands

The first list of demands put forward after the 25 April took up all the problems in the plant, 'including the sackings that had occurred before the 25 April'.

- 1 After 11 March, his empire was nationalised. Champasimau is now in Paris plotting.
- 2 This is worth thinking about. If we remember that it is the CP that has been pushing for the Intersindical, we can see what a bad tactic this has been. It has forced many workers into the arms of the Socialist Party; at least the SP is not pushing the Intersindical, which is full of people who compromised with the fascists.

PORTUGAL SPECIAL 7p



All over Portugal slogans have been painted which say; 'CRIAR PODER POPULAR' (Create Popular Power). And this 'Popular Power' is not an abstract concept for the workers and peasants of Portugal, it is a very real process through which they come to control more and more aspects of their lives. Concretely it means;

- hundreds of factories occupied and under workers control, which means workers commissions having a say in how much is made and what is made.
- occupations of land by the peasants. Most of the occupied land is being cultivated on a co-operative basis. In Porto, the products from co-operatives are being sold direct to tenants at markets run by the tenants commissions. Many peasants from the co-operatives came on their tractors to take part in the Aug 20th demonstration - this was part of a political programme to re-unite the class.
- occupations of houses by tenants and squatters. In Porto and other big cities, tenants commissions are organized on a city-wide basis.

The commissions are beginning to repair and build houses and negotiate with the water and electricity boards. Some of the commissions run shops, some have newspapers.

- the beginnings of a free health service in hospitals under workers control and occupied clinics. In Lisbon, women workers who have taken over their laundry plan to make it a free service so that 'working-class women will be liberated from housework and the country will save foreign currency because individual families will not have to buy washing machines'. In Porto, women who used to be maids of the rich have occupied a mansion which they have turned into a co-operative for housework. They have declared that 'they will no longer do useless work in the houses of the bourgeois. They want to be at the service of other workers and not of parasites'. They have turned the mansion into a creche and a canteen.

- a newspaper (Republica) and a radio-station (Renascenca) that the workers have taken control of. They are setting up a People's Information Co-operative which will be the voice

and link of the tenants and workers committees. - in a few places representatives of the different organs of popular power come together in a Popular Assembly + to which the local soldiers committees send representatives. According to the COPCON document, when there are enough functioning local popular assemblies a national popular assembly will be set up to which all the local ones will send reps.

At a political level, popular power is represented by the revolutionary groups that have joined in a United Revolutionary Front- the PRP, LUAR, MES, LCI and the FSP. All these groups support the building of popular power, their militants are actively involved in the setting up and pushing forward of the workers commissions and tenants committees. And in many occupations, these groups have provided military assistance that has enabled those occupying to remain in control.

At a military level, popular power is represented by the soldiers and few officers who support the COPCON document, which is an outline for the building of popular power. The MFA is now split and the officers and soldiers inside the armed forces are being forced to choose sides. A process has started where left-wing soldiers are giving arms to the left wing groups who are arming the workers and peasants.

WILL THE REVOLUTIONARY FORCES IN PORTUGAL WIN?

Those who remember what happened in 1973 in Chile see many similarities with the situation in Portugal now. In Chile after the lorry-owners strike, there was the same building of popular power, the development of popular assemblies, the workers taking control of production and distribution. And it was this development of popular power that forced the ruling-class in Chile to make a military intervention that, sadly, was successful. In the same way, the Portuguese capitalists and ruling class cannot let popular power develop in

Portugal; they know that its triumph means the triumph of the revolution.

Revolutionaries must not be the servants of history. They must be able to see clearly the differences between historical situations. And there are two very important differences between Chile in 1973 and Portugal today;

1. the revolutionary movement has support inside the armed forces. It would be dangerous not to accept the fact that revolutionaries are in a minority inside the armed forces, but there are enough of them to make them unreliable as a force of repression for the capitalists. There is no regiment in Portugal that can be relied on to fire at workers and peasants in a confrontation. In fact the ruling-class and capitalists know that most regiments would not fire at the people. It is for this reason that they have trained an army in Spain, the ELP.

2. the ruling-class and capitalists are divided. There are those who believe that social democracy (Soares) should be given another go at dealing with the situation; others think that an invasion by Spínola and the ELP is the best bet. Some capitalists are against an invasion by the ELP, they say it would unite the revolutionary left and the moderates and push the revolutionary process forward. They do not want to run the risk of the revolutionary forces winning the civil war.

The political stalemate of the last few months reflects this division amongst the capitalists. But this stalemate at the level of government is only partially reflected at the grass-roots: there popular power is still growing.

No-one can know what will be the outcome of the class confrontation that is coming soon in Portugal. For sure, a revolutionary victory in Portugal would be of immense help to the revolutionary movements of Europe.

IT IS NOW THAT THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN PORTUGAL NEEDS OUR POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT. IF THEY ARE DEFEATED THINGS WILL BE MUCH HARDER - FOR THEM AND FOR US.

TOWARDS A PROLETARIAN HEALTH SERVICE

The fight of militant workers and peasants for socialism means many concrete things. For instance, it means the fight for better health care. Under fascism, the health needs of workers, peasants and their families were totally neglected. In Portugal to-day, the struggle of the proletariat to have its health needs met is taking many forms;

- hospital workers taking over their hospitals as at Santa Maria and Santa Cruz.
- revolutionary organizations occupying houses and turning them into people's clinics (as the LUAR did in Cova da Piedade, a Lisbon suburb)
- inhabitants of a village, assisted by revolutionary organizations, taking over the local mansion and turning it into a people's centre. This has happened at Aveiras de Cima and in other villages.

In the interview, Big Flame comrades talk with members of the Santa Cruz workers' commission. Santa Cruz opened as a luxury clinic in 1973. It has now been nationalized and is under workers' control. Santa Cruz is in the working-class suburb of Lisbon

called Pontinha -

The organizing of the workers of Santa Cruz began immediately after the fall of fascism. Our first general assembly was on 11th May Relations with management (mostly doctors) got worse and in August, management said that the clinic was broke, that it had £110,000 of bad debts. The reply of the workers commission was that they were prepared to accept a 50% cut in wages if 50% of the patients admitted to Santa Cruz were free patients and the workers were represented on the management board. We had discovered that Spirito Santo, the banking family, had milked a lot of money out of the clinic. Now, there was no money left and the clinic would either have to close or become a state hospital. Management's counter proposal was that all salaries should be cut by 50% except those of the doctors, who were earning £1200 a month!! Our response was to occupy the clinic. We had a press conference. We demanded the nationalisation of Santa Cruz, that it become a

hospital at the service of the people; this was on October 7th. We argued that the clinic was only bankrupt because management had been paying excessive interest charges to Spirito Santo and excessive wages to the doctors. The National Guard was called in by the management who wanted to take back and close the clinic.



Medical attention being given at the people's clinic- Cova da Piedade.

We had made another step forward in the struggle - we had taken on the problem of private property. On their side was the large majority of doctors, a few workers, and a reactionary minister of health (a Socialist Party member) - they threatened to take the hospital material away. In this situation, we called on the help of COPCON (at Pontinha); they said they would support our struggle, they mounted a 24 hour guard of the clinic. COPCON soldiers were invited to our general assemblies and they came with us to the series of meetings we had at the ministry. The government appointed a management committee that the workers commission decided to sack. From the popular assembly at Pontinha - which is a coming together of the workers, tenants and soldiers commissions of the area - we formed a committee which sent a report about Santa Cruz to the minister of health (who was by this time a member of the right-wing PPD). The report said that Santa Cruz was a very modern clinic which, together with nearby Santa Maria, must be immediately made available to the working-class. At this point, the minister of health resigned and so far we have not had an answer from the government.

Is the clinic functioning now?

No. All except ten of the doctors have left, many of them have gone abroad. Most of the nurses have stayed. There are left-wing doctors who would help us but they do not have much experience; the machinery here is very complex. Plastic surgery operations can be done here, there is also an intensive care unit. When it was a private clinic, it cost £25 a day to stay at Santa Cruz. We've had no patients for seven months.

What are the plans for Santa Cruz?

The state wants it to become a maternity clinic, but the people around here want it to be a general hospital.

Are the workers being paid wages now?

The workers that occupied and are still here have been paid by the state since the 10th of March. We went without wages for four months: some wages are less than when it was private. When it was private, wages were between £30 and £350 a month (including doctors), now they are between £80 and £160.

How big is Santa Cruz?

It has 120 beds - it can do 35 operations a day. We could easily cope with more beds; we plan to build some new wards on some spare land near the clinic. It will cost £1.5 mil to build the new wards. The present government has allocated money for 7 new hospitals, some of it will go to Santa Cruz.

What kind of an area are we in here?

This is a working-class area. We are near 10 shanty towns that have a total population of over 50,000. We are fighting to have them replaced by decent housing. The most common illnesses of the proletarians in the area are heart, lung and intestinal diseases which come from poor diets and malnutrition. At present, sick people who want free treatment have to go to the public hospitals of Lisbon or Cascais which are 12 miles away. These state hospitals are very old - they are in lousy condition. Santa Cruz is the only hospital with a helicopter landing space, which could be used for emergency cases from all over the country.

Where do the Santa Cruz workers live?

Most of us live in the area. A few live in Lisbon. Since there are no patients, we spend our time having meetings and political discussions - cleaning women and revolutionaries are the vanguard. The nurses are not really into it.

What is the situation with doctors in Portugal, what about the ones who left Santa Cruz?

In the rural areas, there is one doctor for every 6000 inhabitants - all the doctors want to be in the big cities. There are 300 people waiting for vital plastic surgery and yet there are only 12 beds in the whole country allocated to plastic surgery. There are 15,000 who were mutilated in the wars who are not receiving proper medical attention. The workers commission has asked for military doctors if private ones can't be got. Of the 76 doctors that used to work here, many have now gone to Brazil (to look after Spínola?). We have had many offers from comrade doctors from Chile, Argentina, Italy and Germany who want to work at Santa Cruz. The workers commission will take up their offers if the ministry does not soon solve the stalemate we are in.

What is the relationship of the Santa Cruz workers with the military at Pontinha?

We participate with them in the popular assembly. They have left a permanent guard at the clinic. Their general assembly (the ADU) fully supports our struggle. The major from Pontinha has said; 'We intervened on the side of the workers to uphold revolutionary order. The forces of reaction were sabotaging the health needs of the working-class people of the area. Something had to be done'.

'SOLDIERS UNITED WILL WIN'

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MILITARY POLICE

This meeting took place on the 18th of August; it was part of a series of interviews/meetings organized by the Portugal-Italy Solidarity (A.A.P.I.). The meeting took place in the barracks of the Military Police in Belem; a suburb of Lisbon. All during the meeting, soldiers came to listen. Towards the end, the meeting was 'disturbed' by soldiers singing the Internationale and other revolutionary songs in the canteen. After the meeting, we joined the soldiers in the canteen for more talk and singing. Most of the questions are answered by officers, a few by soldiers. The Military Police is one of the most left-wing regiments of COPCON. Recently, they have been a vanguard in the refusal of the Portuguese soldiers to return to Angola; they are no longer prepared to be part of an Imperialist force. The traditional role of the Military Police has been to control and, if necessary, break up workers' demonstrations. Over the past year, they have had many opportunities to talk with the working-class - the result has been that they are no longer prepared to act as a force of repression at the service of capitalists.

What form did the struggle take in the armed forces before April 25th?

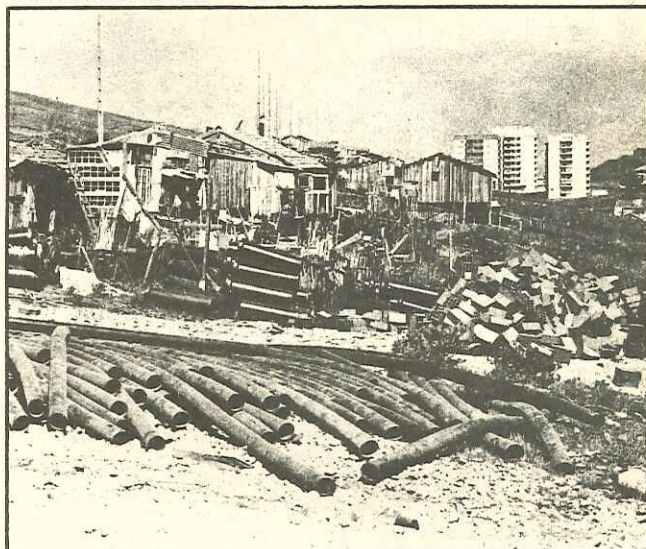
For the liberation movements (FRELIMO etc.), the war against the Portuguese army was an anti-imperialist one. For us in the army, it was also a war against hierarchical structures; before April 25th there was no democratic life in the armed forces.

Before 25th April, there was a certain amount of clandestine organization going on inside the armed forces: so the worms were there already. There were over 100,000 deserters - many of them armed, some were in liason with the MFA. The struggle went on before and after 25th April.

The forces of monopoly capitalism like CUF and Champalimaud supported the Spinola government that was formed after 25th April - this government made no great changes. It was the mass movement that began to change things, especially after the anti-'silent majority' mobilization of the 28th September. We are in the process of developing democratic structures in the armed forces, but they will only really exist when the structures of popular power exist and there are deep links between them. It is not the mission of the MFA to be the revolutionary vanguard - the MFA is the vanguard inside the armed forces. We must work towards a situation where the armed forces are under the control of the vanguards of the working-class. In any case there are many contradictions within the MFA.

What is your involvement in this building of popular power?

We are building concrete links with the working class. Take the problems that arise over the occupation of houses. The housing problem is dramatic - occupations are a mass movement. In each situation the question arises - is the occupation legal or illegal? We cannot decide this according to bourgeois law: what counts are the interests of the proletariat and its allies. Our role in these situations is not to act as a vanguard but to resolve the real contradictions.



In shanty-towns like Belafior, the tenants' commissions work to improve the living conditions of the people.

These cases of house occupations can be very tricky. It must be the case that people have a right to their house which they don't lose if they go away for a few days. Of course, I am not talking about people who have more than one house - that is not acceptable. It is also the case that in the occupations movement there are many counter-revolutionaries who speculate by letting houses that have been occupied. Also, we must make sure that we do not alienate the small property owners whose support is necessary for the revolutionary process; many of them have been made hostile to the revolution. That is why we want popular structures that can decide these things. Us in the military do not want to have to decide as individuals in each confrontation about an occupation. We want there to be tenants commissions we can turn to that can make these decisions as representatives of the tenants of an area. There have been many opportunist occupations that have harmed the unity of the working-class.

PORTUGAL WILL NOT